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General remarks on the meaning of culture and cautions on avoiding cliches and stereotypes introduce the report. Various types of folklore are described with accompanying remarks on their contribution to Hispanic culture. The possible role of proverbs, folk songs, folk games, and folk dances in instruction is discussed. A list of suggested readings is supplied. (WB)

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Number 2

Teaching Hispanic Culture through Folklore

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TEACHING HISPANIC CULTURE THROUGH FOLKLORE

Fifty years ago, foreign language methodologists, of which there were very few, would have hesitated to recommend the use of folklore for the teaching of culture in language classes, not so much because of an aversion to folklore but because cultural considerations had not yet entered into the specific objectives set for foreign language teaching. The revolutionary approach to the teaching of foreign languages after World War II brought, among other things, a decided emphasis on area studies and cultural content as an integral part of teaching. There followed immediately textbooks implementing cultural features in the form of travelogues, literature, art, architecture, and all the creative attainments that characterize the selective efforts of Hispanic civilization. The new textbooks were profusely illustrated with pictures, color photographs of castles, cathedrals, and elegant avenues from La Castellana in Madrid to Paseo de la Reforma in Mexico City in an effort to provide the cultural content suggested by the new order.

Such accouterments were attractive visual aids designed to present the highest achievements in various fields of Hispanic civilization, but they fell short of presenting culture as we understand it in anthropology—as that which gives an insight into the characteristic ways of people rather than the mere refinements of civilization. Unfortunately, there were misleading interpretations of culture that many teachers inadvertently accepted, concepts that semanticists would label "unconscious assumptions." Robert Lado points this out in his book on language teaching:

> Merely to confirm the false clichés, or stereotypes, of one culture regarding another is obviously not learning foreign language and culture. It is enculturation of an undesirable kind, the very same kind that the learning of foreign language is suited to counter. Yet this type of cultural content is often found in textbooks and in the teaching of language in the schools. Such is the type of lesson that in a Spanish language class depicts Mexicans as always wearing gay sombreros, uttering romantic nonsense to señoritas, and endlessly dancing the Mexican hat dance.[1]

Nelson Brooks in his chapter on Language and Culture is even more direct in explaining the meaning of culture in language teaching:

> When we inspect the currently available textbooks that presume to review the culture of the people whose languages are most frequently studied in our schools and colleges, we are forced to the conclusion that both authors and publishers have operated without the benefit of the anthropologist's concept of the word. Aside from culture in the refinement sense, these books present, in picture and in print, little more than the colorful, the quaint, and the offensive. They often give details of geography, climate, and economic life, but do not relate these to the most important characteristics of culture.[2]

The refinements of civilization provide to some extent a common ground for international communication because culture in this sense is a common denominator for a small segment of the peoples of the world, but seldom do such refinements provide an understanding of what makes a Spaniard, a Peruvian, or a Mexican a distinct and individual personality. The folk song, however, from

Spain to Argentina, not only reveals what Hispanic people sing about but also why they sing:

No canto porque yo sé
ni porque mi voz sea buena;
yo canto por darme gusto
en mi tierra y en la ajena.

The refranes or proverbs of Hispanic tradition embody the sense of ethics and morality used by the folk as guideline for behavior: En tus apuros y tus afanes, pide consejo a los refranes. The tales and legends endow folk heroes with attributes characteristic to Hispanic culture, and folkways manifest customs and beliefs of the people that for centuries have guided the course of their existence.

Fortunately, one of the basic characteristics of Hispanic culture is its folkishness, a characteristic that is common to people with a strong sense of realism. Traditions, which are in essence a recollection of a past reality, give Spanish-speaking people a folkloric continuity in a past-present orientation in which the future awaits its turn to become a reality. This folkishness, often referred to as lo popular, provides the language teacher with a wealth of material available in journals and numerous publications by a host of reputable scholars here and abroad. The Journal of American Folklore is one good source from which teachers can select interesting material for classroom use. Occasionally a book rich in folklore material such as Sal y pimienta appears on the market. This short reader contains folktales, folk songs, and proverbs that portray many salient features of Hispanic culture. For instance, the sententiousness of the Spaniard is revealed in a four-line copla included in this book:

El que quiera ser dichoso
dos cosas ha de tener:
la conciencia muy tranquila
y el amor de una mujer.[3]

The picaresqueness of the Spaniard, his religious preoccupation, his trust in luck as an avenue to success, his belief in the supernatural, his fatalism, and his satire recur constantly in the folktale told by tíos and abuelos. This traditional cuento has had a longer and more consistent life in Hispanic culture than any other form of lore, with its various ramifications in the ejemplos of Don Juan Manuel in the fourteenth century, oriental tales such as Calila y Dimna, and incidents in the lives of saints, not to mention the scores of tales adapted and changed from the Thousand and One Nights. These tales of hoary antiquity have served as models for the unending stream of narratives that scholars have been collecting for the past hundred years or more. One of the first of the modern authors to become interested in the cuento was Fernán Caballero, the nineteenth-century novelist who unknowingly became one of Spain's earliest folklorists when she published a collection of cuentos in 1859.[4]

It has been said that every Spaniard is a bit of a rogue, and one of the early forms of the novel, an episodic collection of tales, attests to this trait in the person of Lazarillo de Tormes, who set the stage for the picaresque novel. Another rogue who became better known in the traditional folktales was Pedro de Urdemalas, whose exploits did not escape the pen of Spain's most illustrious novelist, Cervantes himself. But Pedro's picaresque escapades are known from the Spanish southwest in the United States to Argentina in the south. There are

scores of other rogues of the same ilk whose adventures have been carried on by tradition for as long as the Spanish language has been spoken. The rogue or pícaro is so deeply ingrained in Hispanic culture that a man can be a caballero and not pay his debts, or talk his best friend into lending him money by means of a well-played sablazo, or touch, without fear of losing his friendship. Everyone from Don Juan to Pito Pérez is a potential pícaro who, when things go against him, accepts his fate with a fatalism short of the roulette wheel philosophy. The hero of the folktale shrugs his shoulders, "¡Sea por Dios!" and he is ready for his next adventure, "¡A ver qué sale!" All this with a lightheartedness that the Horatio Alger of America, the practical man, would never accept. This and much more is revealed in the folktales collected and published by such scholars as Aurelio M. Espinosa, José M. Espinosa, Juan B. Rael, Howard T. Wheeler, and Yolando Pino Saavedra, to name a few.[5] And for those who would like to read some of these legends and tales in English, there are publications such as Treasure of the Sangre de Cristos: Tales and Traditions of the Spanish Southwest.[6]

The Spanish folk song is another source of cultural material easily accessible to the language teacher. It is a lyrical manifestation of emotions which reveals the feelings of the composer or singer as the song rolls on peoples' tongues from one generation to another. The anonymous production of the Spanish folk song expresses the unadulterated rhythm of the masses, a genuine product born of sincere feeling, an outlet to the joys and sorrows of the folk. It provides an insight into the culture of Hispanic peoples because folk music does not originate in the dazzling ballroom, over the sparkle of champagne, neither is it the result of five o'clock teas or speeding car rides. It is humble in its inception, simple in form, but meaningful and lasting in theme.

The sixteenth-century ballad, still sung in Spanish lands, may tell the story of Gerineldo, the king's page, whose amorous life is spared at a crucial moment by a royal gesture that manifests Spanish compassion and individual interpretation of justice. In the framework of a more conventional ethos, Gerineldo would have lost his head, and the young lady would have lost a very good lover. It might be cricket to have Gerineldo punished, but it would not be Spanish. Again, the ballad may tell the story of the amorous Don Gato, whom every grown-up has known since childhood, in which a don juanesque feline in pursuit of his lady cat falls from a rooftop and breaks his ribs, much to the delight of the mice and rats who celebrate by dressing in red, while the sorrowing gatitas are in mourning. There is also the song about the scribe or escribano whose rascally client could not forgo even on his deathbed the pleasure of pulling his heir's leg by deeding him such items of "value" as a fine-gaited horse of which only a shoe was left or a race horse which he left him painted on the wall.

The folk song provides a penetrating insight into Hispanic culture because it is so varied; it may be anecdotical, lyrical, narrative, and it is oftentimes combined with the folk dance, where a gallant must show his cleverness at improvising when requested to recite a bomba. The huapango of Mexico is insinuating, volatile, and even dangerous, as verses with double entendre are exchanged by the singers to the accompaniment of a guitar. The cielitos sung and danced by the Argentines, the rancheras of the Chileans, and the marineras of Peru are danced with a donaire worthy of the majas of Goya. The folk song is endless and omnipresent, sung at gatherings in a cafe, a cantina, or at a fiesta. It always has a cultural message. The corrido of Mexico is performed with a heroic dash

of horsemanship and gunplay, the Castilian sings the cantos del pandero with his accustomed sobriety, and the gay Andalusian delights us with piquant coplas replete with a restrained suggestiveness that kindles the imagination but does not overstep the bounds of propriety.

Language teachers have within reach all this repertoire of folk songs, recorded by such well-known artists as the Churumbeles de España and countless others from the Hispanic world. The only thing the teacher needs to learn in order to avoid the pitfalls of stereotyped vulgarity is what is authentic, what is truly representative of Hispanic culture.

The cultural section of the Pan American Union in Washington is a clearinghouse for good publications and song collections from the new world. The Hispanic Institute at Columbia University is another good source for publications of folk song albums from Spain and Latin America, under the editorship of the late Hispanist Federico de Onís.[7] There are also several volumes of peninsular and Latin American folk songs with over one thousand selections to choose from, each accompanied by the musical notation as well as the words.[8] Such scholars as Vázquez Santana, Rodríguez Marín, Manuel Zarate, Vicente Mendoza, Merle Simmons, and A. L. Campa have devoted many volumes to the study and interpretation of the Spanish folk song, and their publications can serve as reference for the teacher in search of folk song materials.[9]

There is a popular refrán in Spanish which says: "Los dichos y los refranes son evangelios chiquitos," attesting to the great store that Hispanic peoples put in this form of traditional folk wisdom. So ingrained in Hispanic culture is the proverb that when people wish to emphasize a point in their conversation they usually end up by saying, "Pues, como dice el refrán," and then proceed to quote a saying that sums up succinctly the point they are trying to make. The story is told about a man who, after a long bout with the bottle on a cold night, found his way into a warm church-gathering where the congregation was quoting Bible verses by turn. The borrachito listened for a while and finally stood up as best as he could and gravely announced: "I too am going to quote a refrán." Whereupon he uttered what he thought was a masterful bit of wisdom: "El que da y quita, con el Diablo se desquita."

The proverb is of such moral significance in Spanish that even the drunkard in church felt it was appropriate to quote one, and what is more, the congregation was not offended. A cursory observation of dichos, refranes, or adagios, as they are variously known, will reveal many basic values of Hispanic culture. They are considered wise sayings like the aphorisms of Confucius and are used as touchstones of moral truths for proper behavior. There is no human condition or relationship that is not covered by a score of refranes, so when passing judgment on a person, a man may say, "De tal palo, tal astilla," or "Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres." Then, to conclude with absolute certitude, he may add "El que con lobos anda, a aullar se enseña."

The strong belief in their proverbs gives Hispanic people self assurance, and enables them to pass judgment on human relations, on moral, economic, and spiritual situations with an empiric finality that admits no contradictions unless it be with another saying. The proverb constitutes a down-to-earth practical guideline that contains the distillations of wisdom born of experience and long observation. The widespread use of these maxims was realized by Cervantes when he put them in the mouth of the celebrated Sancho Panza. This folksy gen-

tleman would have been rendered speechless had he been deprived of the proverb, and in the end, even the lofty Don Quixote ends up by quoting proverbs like his squire.

The proverb has lived in the memory of successive generations and has spread with the Spanish language from the Levant to the isolated villages of Peru. Some are universal and have analogues in most languages, such as for example:

Spanish: "Vale más una onza de práctica que una libra de gramática."

French: "Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte."

English: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Scholars in Spain and in the United States have devoted much time to the study of the proverb. The comparative studies of world proverbs made by Archer Taylor[10] will add new perspectives for the student of culture, and such collections as Gonzalo Correas' Vocabulario de refranes y frases proverbiales,[11] with no less than 25,000 items, provide endless materials for consideration. More recently, there are several volumes published by the eminent folklorist, Rodríguez Marín, with such significant titles as 12,600 refranes más and, almost as an afterthought, his later publication, Todavía 10,700 refranes más.[12] For those interested in the Spanish southwest there is a sixty-seven-page monographic study of Sayings and Riddles in New Mexico[13] which may also be helpful.

The folk games of American children are being replaced by other forms of entertainment such as television, car riding, and the motion pictures. Games are no longer folk games but competitive contests in which well-trained teams are pitched against each other with only one goal in mind, to win. The Englishman still "plays the game," that is, he plays for the sake of playing rather than in order to win. Hispanic children, with a greater sense of tradition, and living as many do in rural villages and towns, still participate in folk games that in some cases have been handed down for centuries. This is particularly the case with singing games. Some of these traditional children's games bear a close resemblance to or at least have a counterpart in comparable folk games once played among American children. El huevito, which is known in the Spanish southwest, resembles "This Little Pig Went to Market," and La rueda de San Miguel, named after Saint Michael but with no further religious implication beyond the name, closely resembles "Ring-Around-a-Rosie." Señor Martinejo is a more elaborate game which basically differs little from "Drop the Handkerchief," and Víbora de la mar is acted out exactly like "London Bridge is Falling Down," while in Spain, the melody of Por la Puerta de Alcalá is almost identical to "London Bridge." There is an interesting volume published by Barnes and Company of Spanish games collected by the New Mexico Writers' Project.[14] The directions and the games are both translated into English, and they may serve to illustrate how and what Spanish children play.

In Puerto Rico, the late Dr. Maria Cadilla de Martínez published a study of children's games which is interesting because the usual Spanish preoccupation with religion is clearly manifested.[15] Quien escupe a un cristiano may also be interpreted as meaning "He who spits upon a man," because the word Christian is synonymous with man in Spanish, a cultural concept derived from Spain's long struggle against the Moors who, not being Christians, could hardly be con-

sidered members of the human race. The composite nature of Hispanic culture can be gathered from this study by Dr. de Martinez in the classification she makes of children's games. There are games of Greco-Roman origin, sixteenth-century games, and on successively to contemporary games. The sixteenth-century games provide a cultural-historical index that is particularly interesting. There are games based on ballads, like Gerineldo, and Conde Olinos, and others whose titles remind us that the struggle against the Moors has not been forgotten, as shown by Moros y cristianos.

Spanish dancing is one of the oldest artistic manifestations in the occidental world, and in Spain it has become an inseparable part of the culture of the peninsula, from the forests of Galicia to the sun-drenched fields of Murcia. The average spectator in the United States sees the dance as a performance on the stage, but in the Hispanic world it goes beyond that. There are some cultural implications that the student may easily grasp when they are pointed out to him. The European dance and the "normal" American dance is a physical duet, the captivating charm of which lies in the unison of motion. The charm of the Spanish dance lies in the spectacle, not in the contact. It is the physical expression of motion, and if there is movement and speed, it is not because the dancer is attempting acrobatics like our young generation today. The Spanish folk dance is an individual expression that symbolizes sensual receptivity and power. There is a strong symbolism of rejection, more often the dance of aloofness and coldness than of ardor and surrender. This, together with its restrained intensity, is what makes this dancing devoid of eroticism. It is an act of evocation, it calls up images, hopes, and desires with a vital force of personal pride and joy of rhythm and movement. It is provocative, but the dignity of the Spaniard preserves it from vulgarity. These folk dances do not inflame passions; they invite cooperation and participation by those present through handclapping or by shouting an unrepressed ¡ole! The swaying of the body, the gestures of the hands and arms, and the play of the tilted chin create a symbolism that would overstep the boundaries of moral censorship were it not for the natural decency of the folk dance which interposes to redeem it. The spectator can feel the cultural implications of such a dance without moving from his seat.

There are a number of publications on the folk dances of Spain that are difficult to understand because the authors become so carried away and ecstatic that their language becomes more poetic than elucidating. There is, however, an English translation of José Caballero Bonald's very detailed study of Andalusian Dances which contains one of the most complete collections of photographs of performances by the leading exponents of the dance.[16] Another exceptional publication describing the folk dances of the various regions of Spain, published by the government and accessible through the Unión Musical Española, Carrera de San Jerónimo, Madrid, is entitled Canciones y danzas de España.[17] Action photographs of dancing groups in regional costume, good descriptions of the respective dances, and color drawings make this publication very valuable to the teacher. Those who wish to supplement the peninsular folk dances with those of Latin America may write to the cultural section of the Pan American Union and purchase publications and records that accompany each dance. There is also a collection of eight folk dances from New Mexico which are interesting because they represent another expression of the Spanish folk dance on American soil.[18] Most of these dances came into the state by way of Mexico and illustrate the difference between Mexico and New Mexico in the degree of Indian cultural accretions.

The cultural content provided by the folklore of any linguistic group helps the student to grasp the proper meaning of the symbols that make up language. A number of traditional behavior patterns strike some students as strange because they are different from the patterns of his own culture, and lest they be misinterpreted by failure to understand the symbols, an occasional allusion to folkways will not only prove interesting but enlightening. Custom is so deeply ingrained in the life of Hispanic peoples that an important literary genre called costumbrismo has emerged as one of the most significant styles of writing. Custom behavior is nothing more than folkways, and is, therefore, also highly regional; practices common to Andalusia are not necessarily those of Asturias, although they both are Spanish. This is why a Spaniard places such a great importance on being from a particular province. When asked if he is a Spaniard he will answer, "Yes, I am a Galician," calling attention to the fact that he comes from a given region or province. If he comes from Andalusia, the man will attend a meeting or a public function alone and leave his wife at home where she will be protected from others. But if he is a Basque, he will take his entire family to dinner at a restaurant, and after a few glasses of wine they will dance around the dinner table. Spanish language teachers will discover new insights into Hispanic world culture and add a refreshing and authentic note to their classes with very little additional effort by implementing the wealth of material that abounds in folklore collections and archives here and abroad.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Robert Lado, Language Teaching, a Scientific Approach (New York, 1964), p. 26.

[2]Nelson Brooks, Language and Language Learning (New York, 1960), p. 85.

[3]Manuel Salas, Sal y pimienta (New York, 1958), p. 93.

[4]Fernán Caballero, Cuentos y poesías populares andaluces (Madrid, 1887).

[5]Aurelio M. Espinosa, Cuentos populares españoles, 3 vols. (Stanford, Calif., 1923-26); José M. Espinosa, Spanish Folktales from New Mexico (Austin, Tex., 1937); Juan B. Rael, "Cuentos españoles de Colorado y de Nuevo Méjico," Jour. of American Folklore, LII (July-Dec. 1939); Howard T. Wheeler, Tales from Jalisco, Mexico (Austin, Tex., 1943); Yolando Pino Saavedra, Cuentos folklóricos de Chile, 3 vols. (Santiago de Chile, 1960-61).

[6]Arthur L. Campa, Treasure of the Sangre de Cristos (Norman, Okla., 1963).

[7]Federico de Onís, ed., Canciones españolas, Selección I-IV (New York, 1931-54).

[8]Kurt Schindler, Folk Music and Poetry of Spain and Portugal (New York, 1941).

[9]Higinio Vázquez Santana, Historia de la canción mexicana (Mexico, 1931); Francisco Rodríguez Marín, El canto popular español, 5 vols. (Seville, 1883);

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[10]Archer Taylor, The Proverb (Cambridge, Mass., 1931).

[11]Gonzalo Correas, Vocabulario de refranes y frases proverbiales (Madrid, 1924).

[12]Francisco Rodríguez Marín, 12,600 refranes más (Madrid, 1930) and Todavía 10,700 refranes más (Madrid, 1941).

[13]Arthur L. Campa, Sayings and Riddles of New Mexico, Univ. of New Mexico Bull., Mod. Lang. Series, Vol. VI, No. 2 (Albuquerque, 1937).

[14]The Spanish American Song and Game Book, New Mexico Writers' Project (New York, 1942).

[15]Maria Cadilla de Martínez, Juegos y canciones infantiles de Puerto Rico (San Juan, 1940).

[16]José Caballero Bonald, Andalusian Dances, trans. Charles David Ley (Barcelona, 1957).

[17]Canciones y danzas de España (Madrid, 1950).

[18]Aurora Lucero-White, ed., Folk Dances of the Spanish Colonials of New Mexico (Santa Fe, N.M., 1937).

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